

VZCZCXRO9306
PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #0242 0461053
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 151053Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0293
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3396
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1214
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1081
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1650
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2234
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1391

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000242

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SCUL](#) [DRL](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: ONE YEAR WITHOUT PERSONALITY CULT

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[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (U) President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov celebrated the one-year anniversary of his February 14, 2007, inauguration in private. The only public event to our knowledge -- although there may have been low-key private receptions and parties -- was a concert at the National Cultural Center in honor of the anniversary. Some ministers and deputy cabinet chairmen attended, but not all. The only speech was Speaker of Parliament Akja Nurberdiyeva's in which she announced the splendid concert hall as the new permanent home of the National Symphony Orchestra of Turkmenistan.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The concert hall was packed to the rafters with Ashgabat's elite and a fair number of students. Charge asked several students if they were required to attend. Each answered about the same: "Are you kidding? We've waited a long time to get back to normal."

[1](#)4. (U) The concert program was strictly symphonic, and included no "traditional culture." Composers included Bizet, Borodin, Brahms, Kachaturian, Mozart, Rossini, and Tchaikovsky, as well as Soviet-era Turkmen composers of European-style music Nury Halmammedov and Dangatar Ovezov. Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyevev pointed out to Charge that the soloists were all great artists who had been banned in the latter years of the previous government. The orchestra itself was surprisingly proficient, equivalent to any second-tier orchestra in the West.

[1](#)5. (SBU) One European ambassador commented to Charge, "We should probably be more patient with Turkmenistan. If the Soviets could create this from desert nomads in just a few decades, who can imagine what Turkmenistan will be like 50 years from now?"
HOAGLAND